



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF MAY 8–21, 2019

Summary

- Following the ratification of the constitutional amendments in April, the cabinet introduced and referred several bills to the House that would bring laws regulating judicial authority in line with the new language in the constitution. Specifically, the bills would allow the president to appoint the heads of several judicial entities and would establish a Supreme Council for Judicial Bodies and Entities to review legislation related to the judiciary as well as discuss judicial appointments. The bills were sent to the Constitutional Affairs Committee for review.
- During plenary session last week, Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al criticized the Nation's Future Party for promoting what he described as an aggressive legislative agenda. The party later issued a statement rejecting Abdel 'Al's comments.
- As part of a regional visit, U.S. Representative Ed Case (D-HI) traveled to Egypt and met with prominent officials within the House to discuss counter-terrorism concerns and future cooperation between the respective American and Egyptian legislatures.

Notable Developments

House Debating Bills pertaining to Judicial Appointments and Authority:

Speaker of the House of Representatives Ali Abdel 'Al **announced** that the cabinet had referred multiple bills to the House which would amend laws regulating judicial authorities. These amendments would bring existing laws in accordance with the amended constitution by **granting** the president authority to appoint the head of the Administrative Prosecution, the State Lawsuits Authority, the Military Judicial Authority, the Court of Cassation, the State Council, and the Supreme Constitutional Court, as well as the prosecutor-general. A separate draft law from the government also referred to the House would establish a Supreme Council for Judicial Bodies and Entities, consisting of the

aforementioned legal officials and the president, per the new constitutional requirements. The council would offer suggestions on judicial appointments and provide feedback on legislation pertaining to the judiciary. Constitutional Affairs Committee Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa [stated](#) that the bills were referred to the committee for review, and he expects the committee to complete its review and submit the draft laws for debate during the next plenary session June 9.

Abdel 'Al and Nation's Future Party Engage in Public Dispute:

During last week's plenary session, Abdel 'Al [denounced](#) the Nation's Future Party for adopting what he described as a "Nasserist" strategy in the House by accusing the group of preventing meaningful legislative discourse to occur concerning bills before parliament. Abdel 'Al added that the House is an independent entity and that he will refrain from joining a political party. The party later [released](#) a statement rejecting Abdel 'Al's comments, while also asserting that the House has made legislative strides under the party's leadership.

Congressman Ed Case Visits Egypt:

U.S. Representative Ed Case (D-HI) [visited](#) Egypt last week and met with several representatives, notably Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Kamal Darwish and Defense Committee Chairman Kamal Amer. The group discussed the importance of strategic relations between the two countries, especially pertaining to counter-terrorism issues, while also raising the possibility of additional meetings between Egyptian parliamentarians and U.S. congressional officials. Case's trip to Egypt was part of a larger tour regarding U.S. security concerns in Egypt and Kosovo, and he is the first sitting U.S. representative to [visit](#) Egypt in the past three years.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

The House [agreed](#) in principle to the government's amendments to the regulations of the Investment Law.¹ The amendments focus on the sale of businesses between 2011 and 2014 to ensure that these transactions abide by current legislative policies.

The House [agreed](#) in principle to the government's amendments to the Internal Navigation Law. The law is being [drafted](#) to update and replace a similar law from 1956 governing domestic waterborne transportation.

The House [agreed](#) in principle to a government draft law raising the monthly pension of military personnel by 15 percent.

The Social Solidarity Committee [approved](#) the draft National Council for Population Law, which would establish a national council to manage population issues.

The Economic Affairs Committee [agreed](#) in principle to the amendments to the Investment Law, which includes a fee of up to 10,000 Egyptian pounds (LE) that businesses must pay under new investment transactions.

The cabinet [approved](#) a draft of a new NGO Law, which was subsequently referred to the State Council for judicial review. The bill has yet to be sent to the House to deliberate.

In Session:

The Economic Affairs Committee [approved](#) the proposed budget for the 2019–20 fiscal year for the Controlled Finances Commission.

¹For more information on the Investment Law, please consult TIMEP's [law brief](#) on the subject.

The Health Committee [voted](#) to raise the allocation for the health and population sector in the proposed 2019–20 fiscal year budget by LE17 billion, raising it to LE90 billion. The Egyptian Constitution mandates the government to spend three percent of gross domestic product on public health; even with the increase, the committee's budget is still 1.46 percent of projected GDP for next fiscal year.

The Foreign Affairs Committee [agreed](#) in principle to the proposed budgets for the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.

The Local Administration Committee [approved](#) the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year for the Ministry of Local Development.

The Defense Committee [approved](#) the proposed budget for the Ministry of Interior for the 2019–20 fiscal year.

In News and Statements:

Energy Committee Chairman Talaat al-Suweidi [praised](#) recent development initiatives in Sinai as important steps in promoting economic advancement in the region. Suweidi stated that these initiatives seek to provide employment opportunities and improve the livelihood of residents in the area.

Abdel 'Al [hosted](#) Speaker of the Canadian Senate George Furey. The two officials spoke about bilateral relations, economic reforms in Egypt, and investment in Egypt. Deputy Speaker of the House al-Sayyid al-Sharif also [met](#) with Furey to discuss similar issues.

Al-Sharif [hosted](#) Ghanaian Speaker of Parliament Aaron Mike Ocquaye to discuss bilateral relations.

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah [praised](#) the recent opening of the suspension bridge over the Nile River, which claimed the title of the widest in the world. Hassiballah also noted the international media attention and acclaim that the bridge has received.

Media Committee Chairman Osama Heikal [criticized](#) the lack of coordination between various media and cultural government bodies when drafting their components of the 2019–20 fiscal year budget.

Representative Mustafa al-Gendi of the African Affairs Committee [condemned](#) the terrorist attack in Burkina Faso that killed six individuals last week.

Looking Ahead

- The House will [reconvene](#) in plenary session on June 9.



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EGYPT **PARLIAMENT WATCH**

Egypt Parliament Watch is the most comprehensive project on Egypt's elected legislature, providing analysis of the body's performance in fulfilling its constitutionally mandated tasks, the legislation it produces, and the political dynamics at play.